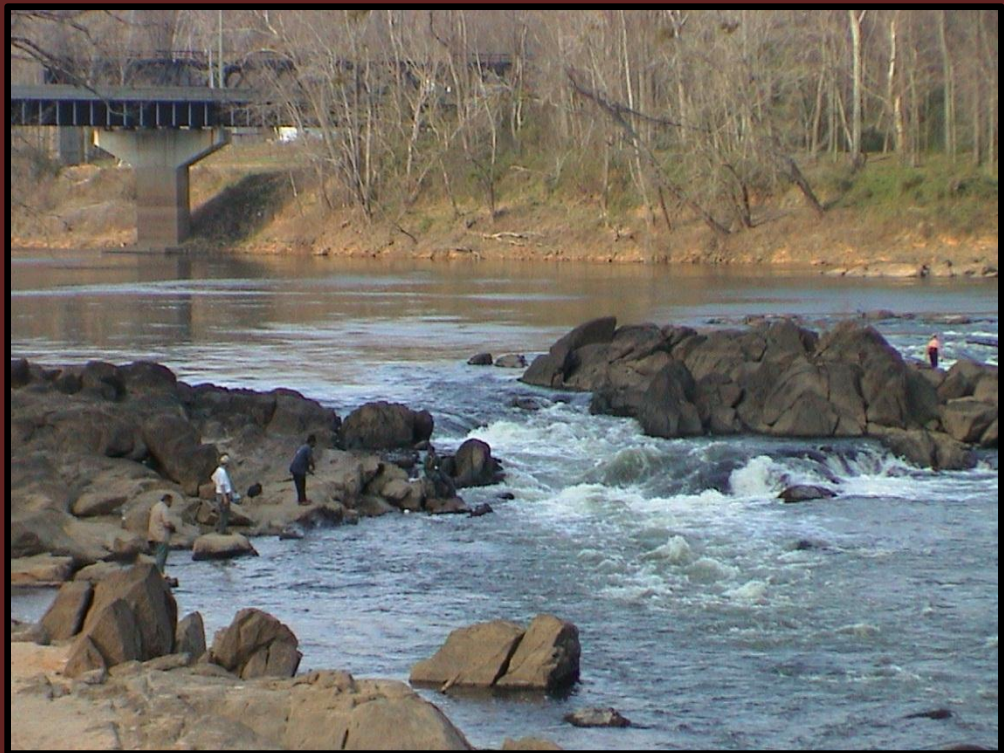


# JAMES C. BURKE PAPERS

Volume 2

*Frances Anne Kemble in North Carolina*

James C. Burke



Cover: This photograph shows the water of the rocks in the Roanoke River at Weldon, North Carolina (Photograph by James C. Burke, 2011).

JAMES C. BURKE PAPERS

VOLUME I

Frances Anne Kemble in North Carolina

by

James C. Burke

with contributions from

Victor Galloway

James C. Burke  
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## Introduction

The final – and most accurate – form of my research on Frances Anne Kemble's trip through North Carolina by the railroad, the stagecoach line, and the steamboat of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road appears in *The Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road Company, 1833-1854* published by McFarland & Company. This volume was prepared for the purpose of showing students how to find geographic and temporal references in historic texts. The instructive nature of this volume extends to the use of archival maps, modern topographic quadrangle maps, GIS datasets, and DEMs for field study planning. Finally, this work illustrates how *time geography* can be applied to the interpretation of historic texts. It was assembled from field study notes, unpublished drafts of an article, and a draft for a dissertation chapter.

The dialogues included in this volume are not exact transcripts of conversations between James Burke and Victor Galloway, but are – in the method of Plato – prepared as a means for conveying the direction of an analytic process. (However, with absolute confidence in Mr. Galloway's remarkable attention to detail, it is my opinion that the dialogues are a good representation of what was said.) Written shortly after the actual conversations, and relying on the memory of both participants, the dialogues were initially intended as an enhancement to the presentation of my internship report in May, 2004. I was a graduate student in the Historic Preservation program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and the internship was a degree requirement. In the end, the dialogues were not necessary since turning in the report sufficed to complete the course.

In 2010, while teaching a course, I prepared a magazine article version of our field study adventures to show my students how they can take a rather dry research report and make the information it contains more palatable to the general reader. It is also included in this volume.

James C. Burke  
October 3, 2002

## FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE IN NORTH CAROLINA

### *Assembling References to Landscape using Maps and Documents (A Dialogue)*

#### *Persons Represented*

JAMES BURKE

VICTOR GALLOWAY

*The setting is the office in BURKE's home in Wilmington, NC. It is the evening of 22 December 2003. GALLOWAY, a longtime friend, is there to discuss the details of an expedition that will retrace part of Frances Ann Kemble's 1838 journey through eastern North Carolina by stagecoach and train. The two gentlemen are concentrating on the stagecoach part of Ms. Kemble's travels.*

BURKE

This is what we have to work with: first, here are two works written by Frances Ann Kemble – *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838 – 1839* and *Records of Later Life*; The John Mac Rae – Robert Brazier map of North Carolina from 1833; and two articles from *The Wilmington Advertiser* – 19 October 1838 and 21 December 1838.

(GALLOWAY picks up Kemble's *Records of Later Life* from the desk and opens it to the first page.)

The section we'll be concerned with in both Frances Kemble's books is the same thing to the word as far as I can tell.

GALLOWAY

This is an old book, "Library of Mary and Cornelius Lynde, No. 764 – A Xmas gift from my dear children, Jane & Nannie, given on Dec, 25<sup>th</sup>, 1882, Chicago, Ill." ...

(He turns to the title page.)

New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1882 ... so, what pages concern us?

BURKE

On the large scale, we are concerned with her account of the trip, starting on page 107 and ending at the top of page 122. But I would rather use *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838 – 1839* for our field study. This is a modern printing edited by John A. Scott published in 1984 by The University of Georgia Press. It has notes and an index, and if it gets lost or damaged it easy to replace. In that book, the account can be found on pages 17 through 36. You can take it with you, and read it over this evening.

(He hands the book to GALLOWAY.)

In my report, I'll provide page numbers in my notes.

GALLOWAY

What about the newspaper article?

BURKE

Frances Kemble and the other travelers were given shelter from the cold, and were fed a meal of sorts, at the home of a hero of the American Revolution she refers to only as "the Colonel." She was there on the evening of 23 December 1838.

GALLOWAY

That is ... one hundred and sixty-five ... yes, one hundred and sixty-five years ago, tomorrow.

BURKE

Though it doesn't mean anything, it is going to be one of those typical North Carolina winter days tomorrow. It will be clear and cold in the morning, warm up to pleasant about midday, and start cooling off rather quickly when the sun starts to set. It matches the weather that she describes in her narrative.

GALLOWAY

A feel of authenticity ...

Well, now what were you saying about the newspapers?

BURKE

The *Wilmington Advertiser* article dated 21 December 1838 states that a section of the railroad between "Faison's and Martin's" has been opened the day before. The article mentions that this is a distance of twelve miles, and the remaining nine miles to Waynesboro – that being Goldsboro – is complete except for putting down iron.

(BURKE opens a notebook.)

Now, if you turn to page 27 in the *Journal of a Residence*, you can see that she has written that the stagecoach traveled 10 miles from the bridge over the Neuse River at Waynesboro to the place where they were supposed to meet the train from Wilmington. She also notes that some of the local country folk had gathered at the site where they were waiting, and it had been the third time that the train had come this far. That is on page 28.

GALLOWAY

That would be ten miles, more or less. The newspaper stated that it was nine miles. They were probably adding iron for three days before she arrived. So, where exactly would that put them?

BURKE

I don't think the stagecoach was equipped with an odometer. Kemble's ten miles is an estimate. The newspaper quotes official reports, so it is likely that the railroad was at nine miles on the 20<sup>th</sup>, and was progressing. Martin's is not a town. It is likely the site of planter's estate, or a crossroads near an estate, or store owned by a person named Martin.

GALLOWAY

We know that the Faison's mentioned is Faison, North Carolina. Right?

BURKE

It sure is.

GALLOWAY

If Martin's were twelve miles up the line from it, as the article said, where would that be?

BURKE

That would be in the Mount Olive area. However, nine miles from Waynesboro – rather, Goldsboro – places you in the neighborhood of the Mount Olive Pickle plant to the north of town. How much iron, if any, they put down in three days is anybody's guess. To add to the problem, this Colonel's house was located one mile along the line from where the stagecoach stopped. The women and their baggage were loaded onto an empty truck – I assume she is describing a flatcar – at hand, and were pushed along the track. Kemble determined that it took about a half-hour.

GALLOWAY

Were they being pushed north or south?

BURKE

If you turn to page 29 in *Journal of a Residence*, you'll see mentions "red steaks in the sky" as the sun is setting. If she were facing the direction they were being push, west would be on her right side and they would be going south. But she also mentions that she was sheltering her baby from the northern wind, so that suggests she was being pushed in a northerly direction.

GALLOWAY

Unless, she was facing the rear of the flatcar with her back to south.

BURKE

That's possible, but she could just as well be facing the rear of the flatcar as it was being pushed north. If you were on that flat car, what would you do?

GALLOWAY

If I were on a flatcar, I would hope that it was being pushed away from the place where the train is expect to stop. This train was coming from the south, and the stagecoach had stopped where the passengers could be loaded onto the train. This train was running late.



It was getting dark. That train may or may not have had a light in 1838. I don't know. But whatever direction I was being pushed, I'd be facing south and looking for that train.

BURKE

So let's say she was facing south with the setting sun on her right. The wind was at her back, and she was sheltering her baby in front of her. Then it was likely that she was being pushed north.

GALLOWAY

Anything else?

BURKE

She mentions the flatcar was pushed over "one or two deep ravines" on the way. At the time, the track would cross a ravine with trestlework. They would drive in some pilings, and mount the crosstie on top of them. Later, they would come back with carloads of dirt – in the 1850s, or thereabout – and build up embankments.

GALLOWAY

So, we rule out sections of one mile that are naturally flat.

BURKE

We've took photographs from Calypso to Goldsboro along that route two years ago, but the only area that I recall being not particularly level was between Dudley and Brogden.

GALLOWAY

That was two days after Christmas. So this is the first thing we need to work on tomorrow?

BURKE

First, let's go to the public library in Mount Olive and see if they have a local history librarian who can help us find out about the location of Martin's. If we can find out anything there, we'll drive on the Old Mount Olive Road that parallels the railroad until we reach the Neuse River outside Goldsboro. Along the way, we will look for embankments and ravines between the north end of Mount Olive and Brogden.

(BURKE takes a book of topographic maps from his desk and opens it.)

Let's look at the map. This area is at 35.2500° and the town of Dudley is prime for the location of the Colonel's estate: three branches of Brooks Swamp within a mile's span along the tracks divide the area to the south. At each branch there is a change in elevation.

(GALLOWAY examines the map.)

GALLOWAY

Call those ravines? They're just depressions.

BURKE

For our purposes, any embankment overhead height is a ravine.

GALLOWAY

What's next?

BURKE

She mentions that the Colonel fought in the Revolution, his wife had died two years earlier, he made his own wine, and she describes the house he lives in. Look at pages 29 and 30.

GALLOWAY

Let see ... "large wooden room" with a "vast chimney" and "brick and plank" with "great beams and rafters" and it's very old type of windows ... he had a bed in the room ... it's a one room design.

BURKE

So the next order of business is to go to the Wayne County Library. They'll have a local history librarian.

GALLOWAY

I see where you're going. How many Revolutionary War heroes who were living in Wayne County in 1838 had wives that died in 1836? He also had achieved the rank of Colonel, and his land was somewhere near Dudley. What are the chances of there being two of them?

BURKE

If he were merely twenty years old in 1776, he would be eight-two in 1838. If was alive in 1840, we would find him in the census. He would stand out from the rest.

(GALLOWAY pages through Kemble's journal.)

We might find a photograph of his house. If not, there might be a house in the area that is of a similar design. I wonder if others in the area had a vineyard, and were making wine. Well, that's for another day.

(BURKE put the MacRae – Brazier Map on the desk.)

For a brief time, before the railroad was completed, they ran a stage line to make the connection. They were building the north and south end at the same time. If we know where the Colonel lived, we will know where the stage line ended in December of 1838.

GALLOWAY

And where did it start?

BURKE

In the neighborhood of Enfield. The second newspaper article, dated 19 October 1838, announced that the section between Halifax and Enfield took until March 1840 to make it to Rocky Mount. But here is something that puzzles me.

(He points to ENFIELD on the map.)

On page 23 she mentions that, after they transferred to stagecoach from the train coming from Weldon around midnight, the road they traveled was a corduroy road that went through a swamp. A local historian in Edgecombe County informed me that there was nothing like that in the county ... where was she going?

GALLOWAY

On the crosstie?

BURKE

By the morning, the coach arrives at Stantonsburg. After we're finished at the Wayne County Library, let's drive to Stantonsburg, then Tarboro, and finish at Enfield.

GALLOWAY

If you get all this figured out, what does it mean?

BURKE

On this map, you can see that these roads were the only way to go south. The stagecoach followed these old roads. They work their way around all these swamps and curve to the east toward Tarboro. Now, when the railroad was built, it cut a line from Enfield, to Rocky Mount, to Goldsboro. Tarboro is a good ways from the railroad. So is Stantonsburg.

GALLOWAY

Nothing moves through it the old way. The north to south route turns east to west.

BURKE

Like changing currents in water, eddies form, and something gets caught up them ... Do you want to meet at a quarter of eight tomorrow morning?

GALLOWAY

Sounds good. What kind of equipment do we need?

BURKE

We'll take cameras, maps, and notebooks. We'll take GPS readings on separate trip.

## Introduction

Fragments of geographic information that describe aspects of place, direction, time of day, relative distance, rate of travel, and climatic conditions are imbedded in a range of documents that may not directly identify a specific place; but the sum of these fragments may be sufficient to recommend a specific location, or define what type of information would be required to advance a recommendation. The interpretation of certain historical texts is limited by not knowing where particular events happened. Archival research can yield sufficient details; however, the researcher can bring to the analysis assumptions about an unfamiliar landscape that can skew the results. There are instances where descriptions of landscapes in two or more historic documents might appear to be referring to the same landscape; yet when subjected to further examination, the researcher finds that they are merely similar.

This study illustrates how historic texts containing geographic information can be deconstructed, reorganized as a set of substantive statements, and reconstructed as a complete, unconditional description of a part of the earth's surface than can be referenced by X, Y coordinates. The results are compared with physical features depicted on relevant maps, and further verified with a site examination. The author selected a problem essential to interpreting a particular historic text where the answer appears to be in another historic text. The object is to prove that the two documents are describing the same location rather than one that is similar. The procedures employed in this particular problem are basic.

Given the opportunity, an individual can access present-day landscapes and make direct observations. The distant past does not present the same possibility. The researcher is left with fragments of experiences recorded by those no longer living, and the cumulative knowledge compiled by other scholars. Yet, there may be elements on a landscape dating to the era of the documents that have been preserved, or have undergone negligible changes. Natural features, particularly in a rural environment, such as unique rock formations, regional soil deposits, certain trees, old growth forests, stable stream networks, and topographic features may exist in an undisturbed state. The built environment may contain dwellings, commercial structures, monuments, roads, railroads, canals, and other artifacts that have been maintained, or their relics, have survived. Some features as mundane as pits, ditches and mounds of earth, under favorable conditions, can remain on the landscape for centuries. If historic documents make mention of these features, the researcher should attempt to locate them. The descriptions of a particular landscape in multiple historic documents assumed to be describing the same location can be validated if a unique set of objects has survived on the likely present-day landscape and has retained its spatial relationships.

## Statement of Problem

The *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1838* by the great English actress Frances Anne Kemble contains a group of chapters entitled "From

Philadelphia to Georgia” that describes her experiences traveling by steamboat, railroad, and stage. While traveling through North Carolina on an uncompleted railroad, she and her fellow travelers sought shelter from the cold and a meal at the home of a local planter, Colonel \_\_\_\_\_. He was a veteran of the American Revolution; his wife had died in 1836, and made his own wine. Kemble, initially charmed by the old gentleman, is disappointed when the meal that he had promised was tea, cheese, and biscuits, and doubly so when he expected payment for the same. She closes her narrative with a cleverly constructed piece of *double-entendre* that could be interpreted as his slaves consider him to be a father figure, or he is the father of his slaves.

This study is not concerned with Mrs. Kemble’s accusations about the Colonel’s character, nor is her veracity relevant. Not only because it cannot be proven, but also because it is not a quality of landscape. The object is to locate where they were. Because she includes many details in her account that describe the interior the old man’s dwelling, his possessions, and his food, a historic preservation professional or archaeologist might find a practical application for the study results. In determining an exact location, it follows that its owner can be identified. If it can be proven that he participated in the American Revolution, a preservation professional could use the results to prepare a National Register Nomination, assuming something remains to be preserved; and were he a significant figure in the conflict, the site may be deemed appropriate for archaeological inquiry. Collaterally, Kemble’s descriptions of the men constructing the railroad, the method of construction, its rolling stock, and the dress of the inhabitants living nearby become useful in a range of disciplines when the location of the Colonel’s dwelling is established.

It so happens that in 1842, Kemble published an article in the British periodical *Bentley’s Miscellany* under her married name Mrs. Butler entitled “A Winter’s Journey to Georgia U.S.” that appeared in two parts (*Bentley’s Miscellany*, 1842, 12:1-13, 113-123). The *Journal*, originally published in 1863, incorporated the text of the article that appeared in *Bentley’s* nearly verbatim.

This 1842 version elicited a response when it was published in the United States: an article that was published in the *Charleston Courier*, and later reprinted in the widely circulated *Niles’ National Register*, entitled “Revolutionary Reminiscences” with the subtitle “Fanny Kemble in North Carolina” submitted under the *nom de plume* “The Boors of Carolina” in 1842 (*Niles National Register*, 1842, 13, 5; APS Online, 69). This article was a response directed towards Mrs. Kemble’s article in *Bentley’s*, and republished in the *New York Express*. “The Boors of Carolina” had been personally acquainted with Col. Ezekiel Slocumb and his wife Mary, and was aware that the actress had been there. He dismissed her accusations that he would charge travelers for a meal, and refutes her notion that he had children by his slave. (As mentioned above, these issues are beyond the scope of this study.) His descriptions of the Slocumb plantation, and its environs were precise; and the description of the Colonel’s service is that of commander of a small group of militia raiders harassing British troops as they advance towards Virginia, and the site of a local engagement call “dead man’s field.” The location of the plantation is given as 1.5 miles south of Dudley depot in Wayne County, North Carolina.

It would seem that the two documents dovetail: the response named of the Colonel, connected Mrs. Kemble to the location, provided the location of his plantation, and described events in his military service that may prove significant in the context of American Revolution research. Why undertake a time consuming analysis that will yield the same results? The answer is obvious when one recalls the many empirical problems that geographers address regularly. Thinking statistically, there is a one-to-one correlation between the documents if the words “Mrs. Butler a.k.a Frances Anne Kemble or Fanny Kemble” are considered to be a unique value. The word “North Carolina” is another unique value that has a one-to-one correlation; however, the words “Colonel” and “railroad” are not unique values, nor are many other elements the two documents share. While each writer, within the body of their documents, defines the colonel that lives near the railroad with similar attributes, it does not exclude the possibility, however slight, of the existence of other individuals who were, or claimed to be, colonels of the American Revolution era that lived anywhere along one of the two North Carolina railroads under construction in December of 1838. It is proper science to identify all other factors that would yield different results; and proper historic research should aspire to the same standards when the documents in question provide enough information to elevate the conclusion from the realm of conjecture.

### Deconstruction of the Texts

The author has selected Mrs. Butler’s (Kemble’s) 1842 article in *Bentley’s Miscellany* to deconstruct not only because it is an earlier version of the same account published in her 1863 *Journal*, it is also contemporary with the response. In like fashion, the response from “The Boors of Carolina” in *Niles’ National Register* also will be deconstructed. The only element of both documents that can be assume to be true without proof is that the writers had submitted the work of their own hands, their observation came from personal experience, and they were not writing fiction.

The most basic question to be answered in the Kemble texts is what railroad in North Carolina she was traveling on. There were two railroads under construction in the state in 1838, the Raleigh & Gaston Rail Road and the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road. The Raleigh & Gaston, as the name suggests, was constructed from the town of Gaston on the Roanoke River to Raleigh. It connected to the Petersburg Rail Road via the Greenville & Roanoke Rail Road. The other railroad, the Wilmington & Raleigh, extended from the town of Weldon on the Roanoke to the port of Wilmington. The name of the company is deceptive, because its incorporators originally intended to build a railroad between Raleigh & Wilmington, but the route was changed to Weldon and the name of the company was not change to the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad until much later. This railroad provided a steamboat connection from Wilmington to Charleston; and it connected to the Portsmouth & Roanoke Rail Road and the Petersburg Rail Road at its northern terminus. Details in the “A Winter’s Journey to Georgia U.S.” exclude all but the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road: Mrs. Kemble is traveling from Suffolk to Wilmington; she waits for the train at Weldon, it took her to a stagecoach that pass through Stantonsburg and Waynesborough; when she resumed rail travel, the train took her to Wilmington; and she took the steamboat from

Wilmington to Charleston (Bentley's Miscellany, 1842, 12:6, 8-10, 113, 115). The Raleigh & Gaston Rail Road operated in a different part of the state, and none of the places mentioned are located on its route.

The next task is to determine how far had the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road Company advanced in the construction of their railroad, and what sections were in operation in December of 1838. The answer can be found in a letter written to North Carolina's Board of Internal Improvement by Alexander Anderson, president *pro tem* of the company, and several articles published in the *Wilmington Advertiser*.

The Road is completed in a superior style, and daily use for the transportation of passengers and produce from this place to Faison's Depot, a distance of 64 miles, and from Weldon to Enfield 20 miles, making 84 miles. From Faison's depot to Waynesborough depot is 19 miles; about four miles of this is finished, and the remainder graded and all the sills and rails laid down and ready for the iron ...

– (Board of Internal Improvement, 1838, Letter of Alexander Anderson) –

The remaining nine miles of track to Waynesborough (Goldsboro) lacked only the iron to make it complete (Wilmington Advertiser, 21 December 1838), and that was being shipped from New York and Philadelphia (ibid, 11 January 1839). Does this agree with Mrs. Kemble's narrative? Remarkably, she records that the distance of the stagecoach ride from the bridge over the Neuse River at Waynesborough to the place where they were to meet the train from Wilmington was ten miles (Bentley's Miscellany, ibid, 11). The distance between the modern town of Dudley and Goldsboro is approximately nine miles. Mrs. Kemble gives the distance as ten miles and she reports that the distance from where the stagecoach stopped and the home of the Colonel was one mile along the course of the track, so the area to be examined should include the land fronting the railroad two miles north and two miles south of Dudley. The texts will now be examined for geographic references. From this point, these references will appear in bold print in block quotes through this study. An examination of the Kemble narrative begins after her stagecoach crossed the Neuse River.

The **ten miles** which followed were **over heavy sandy roads**, and it was **near sunset when we reached the place where we were to take the railroad**. The train, however, had not arrived, and we sat still in the coaches, there being **neither town, village, nor even road-side inn at hand**, where we might take shelter from **the bitter blast** which swept through **the pine-woods** by which we were surrounded; and so we waited patiently, the **day gradually drooping, the evening air becoming colder ...**

– (ibid) –

What does this mean in geographic (also climatic) terms? The sandy soil and pine-woods are characteristics found in the coastal plain region of North Carolina. The road intersects or parallels the railroad, and the section of railroad completed is between towns. The rapid temperature drop at sunset is indicative of low humidity, and the bitter blast is

likely a cold air mass moving in from the north. There are two questions that should be asked about this location. Why is this section of the railroad open to this point, and how long has it been in use? The answer to the first question is found in “Section Twenty-six” of an *Act to Incorporate the Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road Company* passed by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1833, and reprinted in the 1855 annual report to the stockholders.

*Be it further enacted*, That so soon as ten miles of said rail road shall be completed, and as often thereafter as any other section of like length shall be completed, the said company, or the president and directors, may transport all produce or other commodities, that shall be deposited convenient to the said road for that purpose, and which they may be required to convey to any point on said road ...

– (Wilmington & Weldon Rail Road Company, 1855, 39) –

This section of the act puts a legal limit on the minimum length the company can open for traffic: it had to be at least ten miles of track. Thus, if the railroad was abiding by their charter, they had opened a section of track at least ten miles in length. Alexander Anderson stated that the distance between Faison Depot and Waynesborough Depot was nineteen miles. Is this track distance, or direct distance? The article in the *Wilmington Advertiser* is dated *two days* before Mrs. Kemble was there.

The section of the Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road between **Faison’s and Martin’s, 12 miles long**, was traveled over **yesterday** for the first time by the passenger’s train. **The remaining section—nine miles—**between Wilmington and **Waynesboro’** is finished, except the iron, which will be nailed down as speedily as possible.

– (Wilmington Advertiser, **21 December** 1838) –

If the bold text is examined, the total number of miles between Faison’s Depot and Waynesborough by rail is twenty-one miles. The answer to the second question is that this section was first used on 20 December 1838. The several texts suggest slightly different distances that may have gone unnoticed if they were not being analyzed; the actual distance between Faison’s and these other places mentioned need to be measured on an accurate map – both direct distances and distances by rail – since that depot site still exists. The newspaper article provides a new location to consider, Martin’s: the train stops at this undefined place, it may have been located twelve miles from Faison’s Depot, and the Slocomb plantation is in the neighborhood. Continuing the analysis of the Kemble text, she makes note that a group of local people had gathered at the site where the stagecoach was waiting “to see the hot-water carriages come up for only the third time into the midst of their savage solitude” (Bentley’s *Miscellany*, *ibid*). This appears likely since the newspaper account suggests that the first passenger train arrived here on 20 December 1838. The title of the article, “Staging reduced and the comfort of travelers advanced,” suggests the stages were also at this point for the first time on the same date (Wilmington Advertiser, *ibid*). The Kemble text also makes mention of the gentlemen of her party seeking a meal at “a miserable farm-house across the fields” (Bentley’s *Miscellany*, *ibid*). An inventory of the



geographic references that have been gleaned from the texts so far would include these elements: the stages had stopped at a location called Martin's that is twelve miles north from Faison, and approximately nine miles south of Waynesborough Depot by rail. There is a stand of pines on one or the other side of the railroad, and a farm house separated by a field on the other side of the track. If a road is paralleling the track, the house could be facing the road; if it is at an intersection, it could also be facing the other road. Whatever direction the house is facing, it is likely that the house was built with the front of the house facing an established road. This consideration may be insignificant, but should be noted if additional archival and map research exposes references to Martin's Crossroads, Martin's Farm, or anything similar.

The gentlemen travelers agreed that they would seek shelter at the farm of "a man of some standing in the neighborhood" who lived about one mile away on the railroad. The luggage, women, and children were loaded on to an "empty baggage-car, or rather a mere platform on wheels," and utilized the Black men that were there to push it along the railroad. It took near a half an hour to reach the Colonel's plantation. She and a companion shelter the babies in their arms to shield them from "the bleak north wind that whistled over us" (*Bentley's Miscellany*, *ibid*, 11-12). With a baby in her arms, it is likely she had her back to the wind.

**The last embers of daylight were dying out in dusky red streaks along the horizon**, and the dreary waste around us looked like the very shaggy edge of all creation. The men who pushed us along encouraged each other with wild shouts and yells, and every now and then their labour was one of no little danger, as well as difficulty – for **the road crossed one or two deep ravines and morasses at a considerable height**, and nothing but the **iron rails were laid across piles driven into these places**, it became a service of considerable risk to run along these narrow ledges, at the same time urging our car along ... we presently beheld, with no satisfaction, **a cluster of houses in the fields at some little distance from the road**.

– (*ibid*, 12) –

The Sun and Moon data for the coordinates of this area of Wayne County, North Carolina for Sunday 23 December 1838 as calculated by the US Naval Observatory are as follows: sunset was at 5:05 PM, with evening civil twilight ending at 5:33; the Moon transit was at 6:02 PM, and it was a first quarter Moon (US Naval Observatory Astronomical Applications Department, 2007, <http://aa.usno.navy.mil>; last accessed on 13 December 2007). The fact that Mrs. Kemble could distinguish the houses in the field at the site of the Colonel's plantation suggests that civil twilight hadn't yet come to an end. The first quarter Moon would not have provided enough light for that extremely dangerous trip there on the flat car if it were later. Her narrative does not indicate the direction they are traveling, but the "ravines and morasses" she describes suggests unique landscape features that might appear on topographic maps and could be observed on a site visit.

There are several problems in Mrs. Kemble's narrative that need to be addressed before continuing with her description of the interior of the Colonel's home. It is getting

dark, and the train from Wilmington is overdue. If they started at the end of the newly opened twelve miles of track, and the Black men are pushing the women and children on a flat car south, they are pushing them in the direction the train will be coming. Not only that, the car is being push over trestlework. There is no mention of the stagecoach leaving, and if it had left, there was a group of laborers at hand to help them carry their luggage an extra mile down the road. That is, if there is a road parallel to the railroad. If not, the railroad is the only direct means to get to the plantation. What happens with the flat car when they arrive at the Colonel's plantation? It can't be left there because the engineer would expect it, and probably wouldn't see it soon enough in the dark. So, do the Black men would have taken a big risk pushing the car along at twilight more than double the risk by pushing it back at dusk? Now, if the flat car was being pushed north, there must be a reason why the railroad is not using the remaining miles of track. This is a return to the ten miles/twelve miles puzzle that was presented earlier. The charter of the company required ten miles of track to be put down before the section was open, but what if the ten mile mark places the train on trestlework over a ravine or in a swamp? The train needed a place to take on freight and passengers that was accessible by an existing road, and it had to be enough space to construct an arrangement of track and switches to get the locomotive and tender pointed in the right direction for the return trip. If such a place were at the eight mile mark, it could not be used till the company built ten. The text has presented so many questions about this short length of track, there needs to be proof that such a landscape exists *here*.

In 1836, Ruffin's *Farmer's Register* published "Extracts from the Report of Walter Gwynn, Esq., Engineer, to the President and Directors of the Wilmington and Raleigh Rail Road Company." This is a condensed version of the survey of several routes being considered at that time. The Western Route is the one that was selected, and this block quote below concerns the section of track between Faison's Depot and the Neuse River. Gwynn refers the Goshen in his text. Goshen Swamp begins just north of Faison Depot, and covers a large area; but it is outside the study area. The relevant streams and landscape features will appear in bold print.

Immediately on ascending from the valley of Goshen, the route reaches a **dry, level, open woods through which it passes to Brook's Branch**. The formation of the rail road on this portion of the route will consist, chiefly, in **cutting down large trees which overspread** the track, and hewing and preparing them for the reception of the iron rails. After making a **slight undulation in crossing Brook's Branch**, which is a **very inconsiderable stream**, it arrives at the **same level ground**, on which it **continues to the head of Yellow Marsh**; along the margin of which, it descends to the valley of the Neuse River ...

– (*Farmer's Register*, 1836; 4, 6; APS Online, 348) –

The historian at this point must refer to a modern topographic map. These can be ordered from the USGS, but for the immediate purpose of referencing the above mentioned streams, the USGS in cooperation with Microsoft Corporation offer the free service "TerraServer" that can be access from the USGS Website, *The National Map* (USGS, The National Map, <http://nationalmap.gov/gio/viewonline.html>; last accessed on 14 December 2007).

Brogden, Dudley, and Mt. Olive can be examined on the available topographic map dated 1 July 1983. This map show the railroad track crossing both Brooks Swamp and Yellow Marsh Branch at Gwynn described.

“Revolutionary Reminiscences. Fanny Kemble in North Carolina” was published in the *Charleston Courier* and republished in *Niles’ National Register* on 1 October 1842. The writer, referring to Mrs. Kemble’s denigrating remark about the country people that had come to see the train from Wilmington, signs his response “The Boors of Carolina.”

Mrs. B. gives a very correct account of the colonel and of his mansion as it appeared by night. It is a common **two story frame house**, very ancient – and so was its master, for I regret to say the venerable Colonel died on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of July 1840, in the 89<sup>th</sup> year of his age ... **The house fronts the east, and an avenue of half a mile in length, and almost 150 feet in breadth, stretches to the easternmost side of the plantation, where was a highway, and beyond that, open grounds partly dry meadow and partly sand barren. This avenue was lined on the south side by a high fence and a thick hedge row of forest trees now removed and replaced by the pride of India and other ornamental trees; on the north the common rail fence of seven or eight feet high**, such as is seen on all plantations of good farmers in the low country where the necessary timber is convenient ...

– (*Niles’ National Register*, 1842, 13, 5; APS Online, 69) –

The writer includes additional details of the plantation when he describes an event that occurred during the American Revolution. Col. Slocomb and members of the local militia narrowly escaped when they unknowingly came upon the British encamped on the plantation grounds.

Quick as thought they again wheeled their horses and dashed down the **avenue directly toward the house**, where stood the quarter guard to receive them. On reaching the **garden fence**, a rude structure, which we call a **wattled fence**, they leapt that, the next, amid a shower of balls from the guard, cleared **the canal**, a tremendous leap, and scouring across the **open field to the northwest**, were sheltered in **the wood** before their pursuers could clear the fences of the enclosure. This description should excite the curiosity of any traveling reader, he may see the whole ground as he passes over the **Wilmington rail road, 1½ miles south of Dudley depot**.

– (ibid) –

From the details provided by the writer, the plantation was located south of Dudley. Brogden and Yellow Marsh Branch can be excluded from the examination. The trestlework traversing “one or two deep ravines and morasses at a considerable height” must have been located where the railroad crosses the two tributaries of Brook’s Swamp. The two story frame house faced east at least one half mile from the highway. There is a road on the

topographic map located between the two streams at Brook's Swamp, almost two miles south of Dudley, which is one half mile in length that intersects with a road east of the railroad. This may be the relic of the "avenue." The combination of roads that joins both the suspected half-mile avenue and the railroad appears on modern road maps as Kelly Springs Road SE and Everette Road SE. The distance between the point where Everette Road SE intersects the railroad and the western end of Parker Road SE is 1.3 miles north by the railroad.

The geometry of the modern arrangement of roads suggests two hypotheses that may, in part, be verified with additional research: the first, the stagecoach stopped at a point that is now the intersection of Everette Road SE and Old Mt. Olive Road (3.1 miles from Dudley), where, for the lack of a road, the passengers followed the railroad 1.3 miles to the site of the modern Parker Road SE (the suspected "avenue" on the Slocomb plantation); the second, the stage arrived at the site of what would be Dudley Depot, and they followed the railroad 1.8 miles to the same point. The first hypothesis has the advantages of being the shorter distance and being in a direction away from the expected train. In addition, we can also hypothesize that the Black men were not merely "loitering about" as Mrs. Kemble put it, that they were connected to the construction and/or operation of the railroad; and the flat "baggage" car had been left there to be loaded with the passengers' luggage. The latter may be difficult to prove, but seems odd that luggage would be unloaded from the stage onto a car used by the construction crew for hauling iron, wood, or dirt; or that the stage would deposit the passengers and their luggage without receiving those coming up the road from Wilmington.

The last fragment of text to be examined in Mrs. Kemble's article is her description of the interior of the Colonel's home.

To **the principal one** I made my way, followed by the rest of the poor womankind, and, entering the house without further ceremony, ushered them into **a large species of wooden room**, where blazed a huge pine-wood fire. By this welcome light we descried, sitting in the corner of the **vast chimney**, an old ruddy-faced man ... His residence (considering his rank) was quite the most primitive imaginable, – **a rough brick-and-plank chamber, of considerable dimensions, not even whitewashed, with great beams and rafters by which it was supported displaying the skeleton of the building**, to the complete satisfaction of any who might be curious in architecture. **The windows could close neither at the top, bottom, sides, nor middle**, and were, besides, broken so as to admit several delightful currents of air, which might be received as purely accidental.

– (*Bentley's Miscellany*, *ibid*, 12) –

Kemble states that the same room contained a clock, a bed, and a number of rush-bottom chairs of many sizes. Turkey-feather fans, dried herbs, medicine bottles, and one or two firearms were hung from the wall. Sometime past eight o'clock, they were informed that the train from Wilmington had arrived (*ibid*).

The article written by “The Boors of Carolina” refers to the house having a “piazza,” meaning a covered arcade or a verandah; and during the British occupation of the plantation during the Revolution, he notes that Mrs. Slocomb “withdrew to her room” after being assured by the British commander, Tarleton, that his soldiers would not loot her home. He also mentions a skirmish between a “platoon” of troops under the direction of a Tory captain and the militiamen of Col. Slocomb and Major Williams in the woods and field near the canal. At the time the article was written, the local residents still called this “dead man’s field.” The writer corrects Mrs. Kemble’s remark that the Colonel served homemade wine. It was actually peach brandy prepared under Col. Slocomb’s supervision from the fruit of his own orchard, “the orchard and field to the right” (Nile’s National Register, *ibid*). The article contains many details such as the names of British and American officers and their outfits, the locations of encampments, and the type of food that would have been served in the region.

Having assembled many references associated with landscape and material culture from the selected texts about the Slocomb plantation, there remains the task of determining its size. The tax lists for Wayne County for the year 1786 indicate that the Slocomb plantation was one-hundred and fifty acres (North Carolina State Archives, Treasurer and Comptroller’s Papers, 1786, Box 9, Wayne County Tax List). Now, the deconstructed elements must be reassembled into statements that describe the whole spatial event in concise, disinterested terms:

- 1) On the afternoon of 23 December 1838, the British actress Frances Anne Kemble (Butler) traveling with her husband and infant children on the yet to be completed Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road arrived at a location in the neighborhood of the present-day town of Dudley in Wayne County, North Carolina. They had traveled approximately ten miles from the crossing of the Neuse River at Waynesborough (now a part of Goldsboro) by stagecoach to a point where the existing road intersected the open section of railroad. The text does not provide enough information to determine the exact point; yet Mrs. Kemble records that the distance between this point and the home of the Colonel is one mile by rail. At this point where the stage had stopped, there was a field and farm house on one side of the road and pine forest on the other side. Colonel Ezekiel Slocomb is the only possible candidate for Kemble’s unnamed Colonel: he was a veteran of the American Revolution, his wife died in 1836, his home was located on the railroad near the section of the railroad that had been open on 20 December 1838, and his acquaintances recognized his thinly cloaked identity when Mrs. Kemble (Mrs. Butler) published her article in 1842. The descriptions of the interior of the Colonel’s house in the Kemble text can be connected with the exterior descriptions provided by “The Boors of Carolina.”
- 2) Colonel Slocomb owned a one-hundred and fifty acre plantation near Dudley. The half-mile, one-hundred and fifty foot wide road leading to the Colonel’s house fronted an old highway on the east. There was once a seven or eight foot high fence and a hedge row that ran along the south side of the “avenue” leading to the plantation house. There were “sand barrens,” or sandy patches that would not

support vegetation, near the highway. On the northwest corner of the plantation, visible from the railroad, being one and a half miles south of Dudley Depot, was an open field with woods on the north side and a canal on the south side. The plantation house, surrounded by outbuildings, was a short distance from the railroad track and its front faced the east. It was a two-story frame structure of brick and plank construction. It had a verandah, and/or cover walkway. The framework was exposed in the interior, it was not painted, and the windows were set in unmovable frames. There was at least one large fireplace, and the room that contained it was large. The plantation had a peach orchard, and the "Pride of India," that term being applied to both the crape myrtle and the chinaberry tree, would have been used later as ornamental plants along the "avenue."

- 3) Sunset occurred at 5:05 PM that day. The wind was blowing from the north. Mrs. Kemble, her children, and the other women passengers boarded the available flat car that was used to haul baggage, and were pushed by Black men one mile along the railroad through Brook's Swamp to the rear of Colonel Slocomb's plantation. Ten male passengers followed behind the flat car.

#### Verification

Testing of the two hypotheses presented in the previous section involves identifying the "one or two deep ravines and morasses" within a three mile distance south of the site of Dudley Depot on the line of the railroad. This is the only landscape element linking the two documents analyzed. It can also be defined in a specific set of X, Y coordinates representing movement from one location to another along a fixed route: Mrs. Kemble was pushed a distance of approximately one mile on a railroad car from the site where the stagecoaches were to meet the train from Wilmington to the home of the Colonel. The sand barrens, the canal, "dead man's field," the site of the peach orchard, and the plantation house are all unknowns on a one hundred fifty acre parcel of undetermined dimensions; and though they were observable in 1842, there is no reason to assume any of them remain. The entire site might be a house, development, factory, or shopping center.

As stated early, the purpose of this study is to glean enough information from the historic texts to *recommend* a site for further inquiry. Taking this recommendation as a starting point, the historic preservation profession and/or archaeologist must determine the significance of the site and make the appropriate arrangements with the property owners. The professional must then first examine the life and career of Colonel Ezekiel Slocomb to establish his place in North Carolina's antebellum history; or else establish the significance of the plantation and whatever opportunities it may present in expanding what is known about antebellum material culture. Otherwise, there are several purely historical topics that arise from the questions posed by the examination of the text: 1) knowing the identity of the "Colonel" and details about his place of residence enhances the interpretation of Frances Anne Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*; 2) the text illustrates how the *Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road*, an example of early railroad construction in the United States, employed a trestlework of pilings for

crossing some stretches of uneven ground rather than earth embankments; 3) and it gives no indication where roads of the antebellum network in North Carolina were located. In addition, the Southern antebellum railroads used slave labor in the construction of their railroads, and in some aspects of operating these railroads. The Kemble narrative contains two accounts of groups of Black laborers encamped at the end of both divisions of construction. This is one of the few written accounts of the working and living conditions of this type of work force. Finally, the two documents provide insight into the life of a veteran of the American Revolution.

The methods selected for testing the two hypotheses involve map analysis and a site examination of the section of railroad running through Brook's Swamp. The author downloaded a 1/3 ArcSecond NE CONUS Elevation map from *The National Map* website, hosted by the USGS, for the map extent of 35° 12'35" N to 35° 16'30" N and 77° 59'9" W to 78° 5'43" W – Geographic Coordinate System WGS84 (USGS, 2007, *The National Map*, <http://nationalmap.gov/>; last accessed on 18 December 2007). At this point, the only quality of landscape that needs to be examined is elevation. The heavy black line marks the route of the railroad. The second layer of this map consists of sections of the modern road network east of the railroad taken from US Census TIGER/Line Files (US Census Bureau, 2000, Wayne County, North Carolina; Avenza Systems, Disk 37). These roads appear as thin black lines. The road network west of the road has been excluded because there are no roads in this section intersecting the railroad through Brook's Swamp below Dudley. *Point A* marks the intersection of Everette Road with the railroad; *Point B* marks the intersection of Parker Road with Kelly Springs Road; *Point D* marks the intersection of Brewington Road with the railroad; and *Point E* is the intersection of Sleepy Creek Road/Dudley Road with the railroad – the approximate site of the old Dudley Depot. For those unfamiliar with the geomorphology of the Coastal Plain of North Carolina, the elliptical, crater-like, formations like the one marked by *Letter F* are Carolina Bays. The *Letter C* is the location marked by the double circle is the probable place where the "avenue" leading through Colonel Slocomb's plantation intersected with the railroad (Figure 1).

The distance by the railroad between Everette Road (Point A) and Parker Road (at Letter C) is 1.3 miles; the distance between the railroad and Kelly Springs Road (Point B) by Parker Road is 0.5 miles; the distance by railroad between Parker Road and Brewington Road (Point D) is 1.2 Miles; and the distance between Parker Road and Sleepy Creek Road/Dudley Road (Point E) is 1.8 miles. The distance between Everette Road and Sleepy Creek Road/Dudley Road is 3.1 miles; and the distance between Everette Road and Brewinton Road by the railroad is 2.5 miles. By querying the elevation data on the 1/3 ArcSecond NE CONUS Elevation map, there is about a foot gained in elevation between *Point A* and *Point D*; however, the streams running through the two branches of Brook's under the railroad are over forty feet lower than *Point A* and *Point D*. At this point, it seems like the Mrs. Kemble could have traveled on high trestlework over "ravines and morasses" for about a mile from either direction. This is not necessarily so. The railroad could have chosen to gradually descend from the higher elevation to the south by trestlework to some safe level over the bank full level of the streams. From this point the railroad could have followed the terrain on its ascent. By 1858, all the original trestlework below the Neuse River had been filled as embankments (Wilmington & Weldon Railroad, 1858, 7). Since it is

more likely that the company would have smoothed out the descent and ascent rather than cut it more deeply, the height of the present embankment on the railroad should reflect, to a degree, the construction on the height of the original trestle. Since trains have run over this section of track regularly since 1838, it is not likely the line has been shut down to elevate the track too much higher or lower than it was originally.

Through direct observation by undertaking a site visit, it is apparent that the embankment descending to the southern branch running through Brook's Swamp is at a "considerable height." The height of the embankment gradually increases as the elevation of the land decreases to the southern branch (Figure 2); the level of the embankment is maintained for some distance; and decreases in height as it approaches Parker Road (Figure 3). The photograph taken from Parker Road facing the northern branch of Brook's Swamp shows the embankments to be not nearly as high in their ascent to Dudley as those descending to Parker Road (Figure 4). Assuming these embankments reflect the height of the trestlework that preceded them, the highest trestles would have been on the south side of Brook's Swamp. In this case, the men pushing the "baggage car" north from the vicinity of *Point A* would have been at a dangerous height; whereas, if they were pushing south from *Point D*, the trestlework might not have nearly been as high, but they would have been pushing in the direction of the overdue train.

### Conclusion

In the course of this study, two documents from the early 1840s concerning a common location were deconstructed for their geographic elements and reassembled as a set of geographic statements. The geographic statements in both documents match a common location, Colonel Ezekiel Slocomb's plantation. An examination of the physical landscape along the railroad track within 3.1 miles of the former Dudley depot site affirms the hypothesis that Mrs. Kemble was pushing north in the "baggage car" from the approximate location that can be represented on a map with the coordinates N35.223938°, W78.042719° to N35.24236, W78.04032. The northward direction of travel would carry the car over the "ravine and morasses" at a dangerous height, if the present day embankments are a good indication of the height of the original trestlework. The second set of coordinates can with associated with the approximate location of the "avenue" passing through the Slocomb plantation. These conclusions are the best that can be obtained with the available sources, and are subject to slight revisions if addition research should prove the need to do so.

The author suggests that a further inquiry into the life, military career, and plantation of Colonel Ezekiel Slocomb would enhance the available body of research on North Carolinians that participated in the American Revolution.



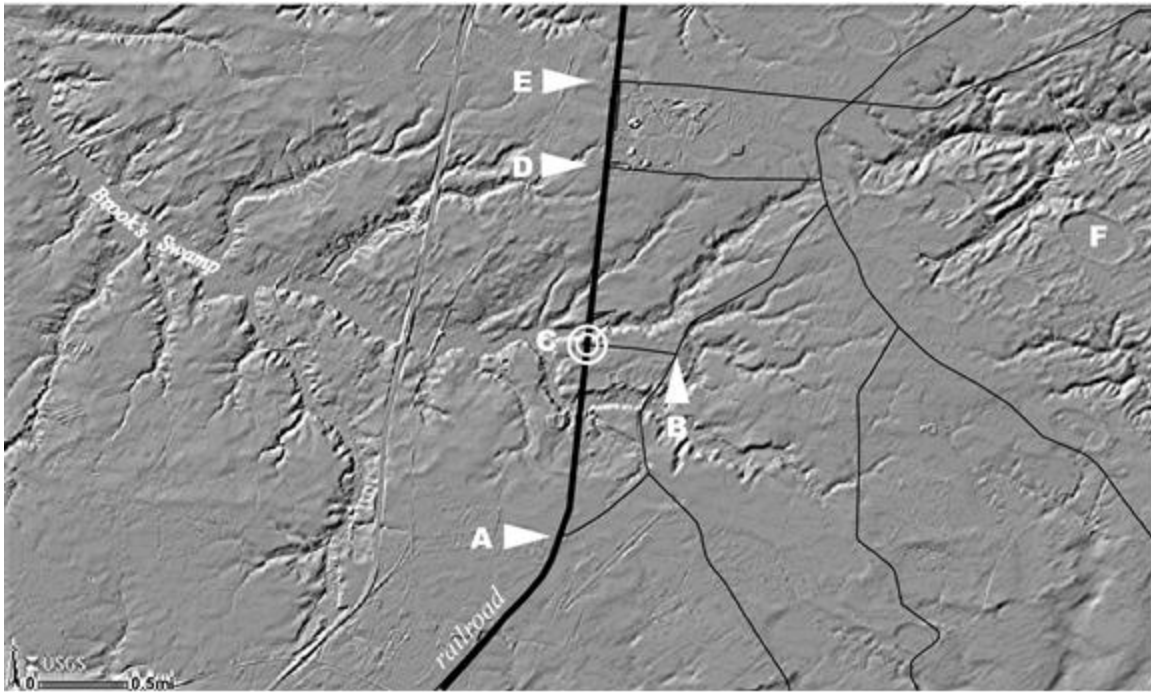


Figure 1. *Point A* marks the intersection of Everett Road with the railroad; *Point B* marks the intersection of Parker Road with Kelly Springs Road; *Point D* marks the intersection of Brewinton Road with the railroad; and *Point E* is the intersection of Sleepy Creek Road/Dudley Road with the railroad – the approximate site of the old Dudley Depot. The elliptical, crater-like, formations like the one marked by *Letter F* are Carolina Bays. The *Letter C* is the location marked by the double circle is the probable place where the “avenue” leading through Colonel Slocomb’s plantation intersected with the railroad. Source: /3 ArcSecond NE CONUS Elevation map from *The National Map* website, hosted by the USGS, for the map extent of 35° 12’35” N to 35° 16’30” N and 77° 59’9” W to 78° 5’43” W – Geographic Coordinate System WGS84; from US Census TIGER/Line Files (US Census Bureau, 2000, North Carolina; Avenza Systems, Disk 37).



Figure 2. The height of the embankment gradually increases as the elevation of the land decreases to the southern branch. Photograph by James C. Burke



Figure 3. This photographs shows the decrease in height of the embankment as it approaches Parker Road. Photograph by James C. Burke.



Figure 4. The photograph taken from Parker Road facing the northern branch of Brook's Swamp shows the embankments to be not nearly as high in their ascent to Dudley as those descending to Parker Road

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*The Landscape of Edgecombe County (A Dialogue)*

*Persons Represented*

BURKE

GALLOWAY

*The setting is NC 222 in Edgecombe County, NC on the afternoon of 23 December 2003. BURKE pulled off the road to take a photograph of an old farmhouse and his back tire is mired in the soil. GALLOWAY gathers pine straw and other debris to place around the wheel so that the wheel might gain some traction.*

GALLOWAY

Trust me, I know this is going to work.

BURKE

I think we're in for an incredible hike if it doesn't.

GALLOWAY

What's the closest town?

BURKE

Tarboro is ten miles ahead of us, and Pinetops is a few miles behind us.

GALLOWAY

All right, that looks like enough. Now, when I give the signal, put it in low gear and I'll push. When you feel it moving ahead for the road, don't hesitate. Don't even think about stopping until you know all four wheels are on the pavement.

BURKE

Just give me the signal.

(BURKE gets into the car, and starts the engine.)

GALLOWAY

Is it in low gear?

BURKE

It sure is.

GALLOWAY

Now, give it some gas!

(GALLOWAY pushes with all his might. The car gradually moves forward, then suddenly lunges forward toward the road.)

Keep going!

(BURKE drives the car back on the pavement, and stops. GALLOWAY runs to the car, opens the car door, and sits down. BURKE starts driving.)

Like I said, just trust me. The next time you come up here, you need to bring a big bag of kitty litter. If you pour it around the wheel, it will give you traction.

BURKE

That sure looked like a nice grassy patch of ground to me.

GALLOWAY

Me, too. But it was saturated. So, I don't recommend taking any more pictures just yet.

BURKE

No, not this time. We have done all we set out to do. Now, it is merely reconnaissance. If something catches your eyes, let me know.

(GALLOWAY picks up the black notebook from the seat, and pages through it.)

There was a place we passed called Pitt Crossroads. I recall that place was mentioned in one of the newspaper articles. So, we know it was around in the 1830s.

GALLOWAY

The information from the Wayne County Library seems to nail the Colonel. His land was within sight of what is now Dudley; he fought in the Revolution; and his wife died in 6 March 1836, and he died on ... are you sure you copied this out right?

BURKE

How's that?

GALLOWAY

This says 4 July 1840. He died on the Fourth of July.

BURKE

I don't know. If I copied it down correctly, then it is a coincidence – probably an appropriate one for a hero of the Revolution. I should have noticed it. But if I was thinking the American Revolution, and subconsciously jotted down the fourth of July, then it's wrong. Still, as a course of procedure, you don't use it until you verify it with other documents.

GALLOWAY

The landscape matches.

BURKE

Very near.

GALLOWAY

How exact does it have to be? Did the stagecoach stop one mile below where Dudley is located, or was it one mile above Dudley, or was it one mile above Mount Olive? Will just saying the Dudley area will be enough? After all, the stagecoach stopped further up the road as more rails when down.

BURKE

We want to find out what route the stagecoach was taking. We know where it started, we know more or less – within tolerances of a mile – where it ended on a particular day. We know that it was in Stantonburg. What we don't know is what roads it used to make the trip from Enfield to Stantonburg. Did they take the path we are following now, or did they follow the less direct route the follows the Tar River towards Rocky Mount?

GALLOWAY

Why the longer route?

BURKE

The 1833 map indicates that there was a post office at Rocky Mount. If the coach was carrying mail, it would have taken that route.

GALLOWAY

She doesn't say anything about that. She didn't mention stopping that night.

BURKE

She said that when dawn came they were still in "pine swamps."

GALLOWAY

Like the one we just found?

BURKE

It's going to take a lot more research.

GALLOWAY

I don't think I've seen another car in the last five minutes.

BURKE

Just rural landscape.

GALLOWAY

The houses sure look different out here. It's architecture of "add-ons." They didn't even try to even it all out, or make you think it was all built at once.



BURKE

That's the kind of thing I want to see. Something different from the houses over by the railroad. When we make it to Enfield, we'll come back by the Rocky Mount way, if, we can keep our light.



Figure 1. Victor Galloway holding a copy of *Mrs. Kemble's Journal* and a video camera at the Neuse River Bridge on Grantham Road near Goldsboro, NC (23 December 2003)

*The stagecoach trip from Enfield to Stantonsburg (Dialogue)*

*Persons Represented*

BURKE

GALLOWAY

*The setting is the office in BURKE's home in Wilmington, NC. It is the evening of 10 January 2004. GALLOWAY is looking at a set of US Geological Survey 7.5 Minute Topographic maps. HE selects one of the maps titled Enfield Quadrangle to examine closely. BURKE is paging through Frederick Law Olmsted's *Journey in the Seaboard Slave States, with Remarks on Their Economy*.*

BURKE

On page 380, Frederick Law Olmsted describes a stagecoach ride through low-lying terrain from the place where the Wilmington & Manchester Rail Road ends to, I think somewhere south of Marion, South Carolina.

GALLOWAY

What does he say?

BURKE

The coach traveled three miles over a "corduroy road" through swampland, and then about eight miles more over a rough road until they came to a log stable in the middle of the woods. After a half-hour, a new driver came and the horses were changed out for fresh ones. Ten miles later, they stopped and changed horses again.

GALLOWAY

Does he mention how many horses pulled the stagecoach?

BURKE

On the next page, he mentions that there were four horses.

GALLOWAY

Kemble doesn't mention making any stops until they reach Stantonsburg.

BURKE

What exactly did she say?

(GALLOWAY opens the copy of Frances Ann Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*. HE turns to the section of the book concerning the stagecoach trip.)

GALLOWAY

She has here that “we splashed, with hardly any intermission, the whole night long.” So, there are five people in the coach, and they started off at about midnight and stopped near Stantonburg just after daybreak ... What’s that? Maybe seven and a half hours?

BURKE

On December twenty-third, it ought to be.

GALLOWAY

Well, “hardly any intermission” doesn’t mean continuous. How many miles are there between Enfield and Stantonburg?

BURKE

It is fifty miles plus or minus a mile. That would be by the shortest route.

GALLOWAY

So, if they changed horses every ten miles that would be three changes.

BURKE

The passengers would have time to get out and walk about ... and other things.

GALLOWAY

That must have been some ride. Let’s say, it took about ten minutes to hitch up a new team. That’s half an hour there. They had to go at least seven miles an hour.

(BURKE takes HIS copy of the Mac Rae – Brazier Map of 1833 on the table.  
GALLOWAY looks at the USGS Quad map on the desk.)

BURKE

Let’s compare maps. If I was a traveler using the Mac Rae – Brazier map in the 1830s, and I was starting from Enfield, there appears to be two roads out of town that would take in the direction of Stantonburg. The first road leads out of town heading east. At the fork in the a few miles out of town, I would take the road going south and cross Fishing Creek at Spear’s Bridge. The second route heads south through the town, and I would cross Fishing Creek at Wyatt’s Bridge. Let me double-check that against the Price – Strother of 1808.

(BURKE compares the two historic maps.)

It’s a match. So, what do you see?

GALLOWAY

Enfield is surrounded by swamps. To the north of town we have Burnt Coat Swamp, Beaverdam Swamp, Marsh Swamp, and Beech Swamp, and to the south the area about Fishing Creek is a massive Swamp. Enfield is built on the high ground. The road going east out of town follows the high ground. The road to the south crossed Fishing Creek to a place called Bricks. It is also located on high ground. Both follow paths of least resistance.

BURKE

Does the road going east fork south?

GALLOWAY

Yes, it does. You have a match. The scale is too tight on this map for me to tell where it goes. I need another map. The road to the south is US 301, but it forks at Bricks. The east fork is heading the right direction. Let me switch maps.

(HE looks through the Quad Maps.)

What to have next?

BURKE

Both roads converge at a point and a single road heads south to cross at Dorches Bridge at Swift Creek.

GALLOWAY

The roads converge at a place called Gethsemane. It continues south to cross Swift Creek, and terminate at a place called Wrendale.

BURKE

Then what?

GALLOWAY

You tell me. There are a lot of choices here.

BURKE

The road cuts east a place where three roads meet.

GALLOWAY

Ha! There's where Oedipus killed his father!

BURKE

Not here. The three roads meet at the confluence of Swift Creek and the Tar River.

GALLOWAY

I need a landmark.

BURKE

The fork going south crosses Teat's Bridge.

GALLOWAY

You don't say ... well, I need something more than that.

BURKE

I don't have enough here. I'm going to jump ahead. Let's look at the U.S. Coast Survey of 1865.

(BURKE places the 1865 *U.S. Coast Survey Map of North Carolina* on the table.)

Teat's Bridge is there, and it is located between the confluence of Swift Creek and the Tar River to the east, and a Falling Creek that empties into the Tar to the west.

GALLOWAY

I have it!

BURKE

Good. Now, take a look at the road atlas and give me a summery. Road names are what I want. The name of a road tells more than a number.

(BURKE hand GALLOWAY a large road atlas of North Carolina.)

Beginning at Enfield.

GALLOWAY

Enfield ... The east route from Enfield starts at Whitaker Street. Outside of town, the road running south is Etheridge Farm Road. The other road out of Enfield is US 301. At Bricks, take the east fork. It's called Speights Chapel Road. On the east route you have to backtrack west when you reach NC 33 and a mile down the road, you take Seven Bridges Road South. Both routes converge at Gethsemane. Then, it is just Speights Chapel Road to Wrendale. Backtrack west a mile till you reach New Hope Church Road, and then drive south. When you reach Dunbar, the road becomes Dunbar Road. That it, were at the Tar River ... Teat's Bridge. You know, when we when to Enfield, we didn't take this route.

BURKE

I know. We took a road that did exist. Rather, didn't exist in 1833. And more than likely didn't exist in 1838. It did exist in 1865. We make our mistake when we followed the road from Stantonsburg to Tarboro right into Tarboro. And we crossed this bridge ... Bells Bridge. It was there in 1865, and wasn't there in 1833.

GALLOWAY

So, the stagecoach went in the direction of Tarboro only as far as this place – McNair Road. They turned south on this road, and traveled a few miles to the Stantonsburg to Tarboro Road. That NC 222 today.

BURKE

They took a bypass. You know, one clue both of us noticed when we took the wrong road was that the architect changed.

GALLOWAY

You stopped seeing the really old stuff.

BURKE

Maybe ... It looks like it.

GALLOWAY

You're not sure?

BURKE

All the historic maps have something on them that I can't find on the modern ones. There is a road running north of Cokey Swamp that begins at Rocky Mount and crosses Edgecombe County to Old Sparta. There is a western road running south, almost as close to Teat's Bridge as the eastern road to Stantonburg.

GALLOWAY

I don't see it.

(BURKE shows GALLOWAY the 1865 map.)

... Oh, there are two roads.

BURKE

The roads form some that looks like an arrowhead. Teat's Bridge is the shaft of the arrow, and the two roads curve in to a point at Pitt's Grove. I think this is Pitt's Crossroads, or the neighborhood. Now, when we look at the modern maps, the west road isn't there. The closest we have here is a road called Temperance Hall Road. But there is a three-mile gap between the crook in this road and Pitt's Crossroads. So, did it connect at one time? Was the course of the road changed so that it would terminate at Pinetops instead of continuing to the crossroads?

GALLOWAY

Pinetops is a town, and there's nothing at the crossroads.

BURKE

But Pinetops is three mile north of the crossroads. Could the roads have met the all along? There are quite a few roads feeding into area.

GALLOWAY

That sounds like a problem. If it takes about the same amount of time to get from Enfield to Stantonburg for both roads, and they are ... wait a minute, I remember something,

(HE opens his copy of Kemble's journal.)

On page 22, she said that when the train stopped left the train and "Walked a few yards into an opening in the woods." Enfield was a town, and she would have said so. There were workers gathered around a fire at the place that they stopped. Wouldn't you think they were south of Enfield?

BURKE

That would be Speights Chapel Road to Wrendale.

GALLOWAY

Do we have any other clues?

BURKE

Yes, but they're not very good ones. On page 32 of Kemble's journal, she mentions horses "gathered round some lonely roadside pine-wood shop, or post office." Now, if she was in a stagecoach owned by the railroad, and the railroad had a contract to deliver the mail, I cannot see why they would not have stopped at the post offices along the route. On the 1833 map, they are marked. Stantonburg was the site of a post office, and so was Rocky Mount. There was also a post office in Tarboro.

GALLOWAY

We have almost exhausted all the information that Kemble gives. We need to start looking somewhere else.

BURKE

She didn't know where she was ... the last think we need to look at is her description of the stop at Stantonburg. She writes that it was a single house in the woods. But Stantonburg was a town. So, she was somewhere near Stantonburg, but not actually in it. On pages 23 through 25 in Kemble's journal she describes the house. It was a two-story structure. The structure has a staircase and banisters – I presume she meant outside the house. The next sentence described how the proprietor of this place, took a towel for a dresser outside where the male travelers were washing up, and offered it to her. This woman's whole adventure is a quest for clean towels. The kitchen is detached. She describes it as a shed.

GALLOWAY

As I see it, this leg of the trip is the hardest to nail down. That is, while she is in motion. But there are times when she is not moving. Stantonburg is one, but there is also Weldon. She stops in Waynesboro – now Goldsboro. Then there's Wilmington. Just where was this inn that was about a mile from the depot? Somebody owned it. What about the steamship *Gov. Dudley*? She gives all these details about the interior of the ship. Do you the specs for this ship?

BURKE

I do.

GALLOWAY

That's easy enough to put together.

BURKE

Let's close the books on Edgecombe County for a while. It looks like need to plant myself in the library. The maps have provided some valuable clues. Now, these places need a history.

GALLOWAY

When do you plan another road trip?



BURKE

When it gets warmer, I'm going to take a trip to Tarboro and spend a few days in the library there. Come May, I have to present a report on all this research. Regardless of what turns up about that particular day in 1838, I need understand Edgecombe County and its systems of roads prior to 1840. Kemble's journal led me to this county. I am beginning to doubt it would tell me anything new.

GALLOWAY

What do you need?

BURKE

What were the routes given in Post Office Department mail contracts – before and after the railroad ... It might be that the stagecoach set out on what is now *13 Bridges Road*, and crossed one of these other bridges. In short, I need more primary sources to nail it down.

[Note: See James C. Burke, *The Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road Company, 1833-1854*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company), 2011]

The stagecoach line of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road operated from 1837 to the railroad's completion in 1840. During construction, work on the northern division from Weldon and the southern division at Wilmington progressed forward at the same time. In order to put the railroad in to operation as quickly as possible, the company use stagecoaches to connect between the completed sections of the railroad. An account of travel on this stagecoach line appears on pages 19 through 36 of Frances Anne Kemble's *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*. Insomuch as the references to North Carolina in Mrs. Kemble's *Journal* are often quoted, hitherto nobody has bothered to retrace her route through the state.

My research deconstructed several texts including the Kemble *Journal* and an article printed in *Niles' National Register* on 1 October 1842 entitled "Revolutionary Reminiscences. Fanny Kemble in North Carolina," and period documents from the Post Office Department. By the word deconstruction, I mean that every reference to place and time was isolated from the rest of the text. Using the extensive index of period newspaper articles that I had compiled in 2000, I was to create a timeline for the construction of the railroad that identified places where construction was ongoing, and changes in the route of the stagecoach line.

Mrs. Kemble fixates on details in her narrative, and this is particularly useful when it comes to her inclusion of date, time, and distance. Even though she does not really know where she is, some of the techniques of *Time Geography* can be used to determine how far the stagecoach has travelled. Without rehashing work that has already been published, the route the stagecoach during the time that Mrs. Kemble travelled in December of 1838 was as follows. The northern division of the railroad was completed as far as Enfield. Here, Mrs. Kemble and her family boarded a stagecoach that took them Stantonsburg via Tarboro. The stage continued to Waynesborough, now a part of Goldsboro, and final came the end of construction of the southern division near the present-day town of Dudley in lower Wayne County.

The most interest aspect of Mrs. Kemble's journey is her encounter with an unnamed "Colonel" at his home while the passenger were waiting for the train from Wilmington. Kemble mentions that he was a hero from the American Revolution, his wife had died two years prior, and he had served under Washington. After locating the route of the stagecoach, it was easy to identify the "Colonel" by examining the 1830 and 1840 US Census, and pension applications for the Revolution. How many veterans of the American Revolution living in lower Wayne County in 1838 could there be? Of these, how many had wives that died in 1836? The answer is one, Ezekiel Slocomb. That is, the same Ezekiel Slocomb whose wife Mary earned fame for her legendary night ride to Moore's Creek that never happened. Well, at least it didn't happen during the Battle of Moore's Creek (even though Ezekiel, a boy, might have been there).

Mrs. Kemble first published her account for her journey through North Carolina in *Bentley's Miscellany* in 1842. This prompted a writer signing his name "Boors of Carolina"

to write the rebuttal “Revolutionary Reminiscences. Fanny Kemble in North Carolina” that appeared in *Niles’ National Register*. This article provides a detailed description of the Slocomb Plantation and its environs including the site of a skirmish between the militia and British soldiers known then as “Dead Man’s Field,” not far from the site of the Dudley Depot. The exploits of Ezekiel Slocomb, a militia raider serving under Colonel William Washington – not George – as well as Mary’s war of wits with the British commander, Tarleton, are described in the article. The writer intended to defend the character of Colonel Slocomb in light of Mrs. Kemble’s accusation that the old gentleman charged the stranded passenger for a poor meal and suggests that he fathered children by his slaves. Kemble, the most celebrated actress of her day, was not a detached observer or journalist of the likes of Frederick Law Olmsted and William Howard Russell; rather, her style includes a plethora of barbs that she hurls recklessly as a petulant sovereign. Certainly, northern readers were amused by her account of a trip through North Carolina having been subjected to abuse in her earlier *Journal of a Residence in America*. The writer “Boors of Carolina” rose to the defense of southern honor and its traditional spirit of hospitality.

The story of Mary Slocomb’s ride to Moore’s Creek appeared in Elizabeth F. Ellet’s *Women of the American Revolution* in the late-1840s. Some aspects of Ellet’s story appear to resemble the earlier article published by “Boors of Carolina.” However, it is likely that the night ride legend developed from another source. The fact of the matter is that the Slocombs did not participate in the Battle of Moore’s Creek. Perhaps, the events of the legend took place at another engagement close to the site of their plantation, or Ellet’s version is a composite of different individuals. Regardless, it is not farfetched to propose the hypothesis that Mrs. Kemble’s abuse of the elderly Colonel in her 1842 narrative contributed to the preservation of the Slocomb story indirectly, for all the shortcomings of subsequent scholarship culminating in the removal of the remains of Ezekiel and Mary Slocomb to the Moore’s Creek Battleground.

As for Mrs. Kemble’s travails on the road, it is difficult to conjure up the slightest measure of sympathy. I have had worse meals with less substance and more dirt, slept on the ground and in my car, and experience greater heat and cold than ever occurs in eastern North Carolina. Further, the facts that all the genteel intellectual women that populate my immediate circle dig up artifacts, wade through swamps, or restore historic buildings, leads me to believe Kemble’s unrelenting diatribes about filth are more the product of some obsessive disorder than the quality of her breeding. After all, the Earth is a dirty place, the elements are unforgiving, and the only difference between an ordeal and an adventure is a positive attitude. If the writer “Boors of Carolina” can be believed, we need only observe the resolve shown by Mary Slocomb during the removal of a tumor in her 72 year reduces Mrs. Kemble’s eloquently worded complaints to unjustified whining. On the other hand, Frances Kemble was not writing for the American reader. Aside from the obvious merit of her passionate condemnation of slavery that secured her place in literature, her audience was the effete nabobs of the English literary circle. The portrayal of the uncultivated, brutish, and naïve American in the savage wilderness was something of a literary convention at the time, and it would hardly seem creditable that the darling of the London stage to find any respite in the land of barbarians. Necessarily, the Victorian Boudicca must

fight a losing battle against filthy towels, sleep deprivation, rude innkeepers, old dry biscuits and “gazing boors.”

Putting modern sensibilities to the rear, the Kemble *Journal* is remarkable for its detailed – near photographic – descriptions of people, places, and physical conditions. For example, she has provided a vivid mental image of the interior of Colonel Slocomb’s rustic dwelling replete with exposed beams, furnishings, and accoutrements. This is a valuable resource in understanding the living conditions of a particular veteran of the American Revolution. She provides a description of the man that humanizes the empty vessel of a name. The initial pile and wooden rail construction is recognizable from the somewhat foolhardy undertaking thought up by the male passengers to load the women and children onto an empty railcar and push it down the track at twilight. The two ravines mentioned in her text are two branches of Brooks Swamp; and if the height of the present-day railroad embankment is any measure of the piling that precede it, the man risked a fall in places of about sixteen feet as they trended on a two-inch strip of iron. Certainly, this was one lot that needed to be supervised.

As early as 2000, when Mrs. Kemble’s account of her journey through North Carolina first came to my attention, it was abundantly clear to me that the text needed to be placed within a geographic context. What she did not mention or did not know is essential to its interpretation.

She was travelling on the yet to be completed Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road, a railroad originally intended to connect the Wilmington with the capitol, but the route was changed to Weldon in 1835. The relentless pace of travel by rail and stagecoach can be attributed to the arrangements the company made to form a “through” connection with the Portsmouth & Roanoke Rail Road, the steamboat line to Baltimore, as well as its own steamboats to the port of Charleston, there the southern route continued on the Charleston & Hamburg Rail Road. The company had recently been awarded the contract to carry the “Southern Great Mail.” She passed towns in North Carolina that she did not know were there including Halifax, Enfield, and Tarboro. The railroad passes to the west of town at Halifax, the original orientation of Enfield as evidenced on Mac Rae-Brazier Map of 1833 and the Jeremy Gilmer Map of 1863 is at the older crossroads to the west of the railroad, and she likely missed Tarboro because it was the middle of the night.

She mentions a large group of men, mostly Black, “loitering about” at the end of construction on both divisions. Surely, the men encamped at these locations were the contractors and their slaves that were building the railroad. If her journey had taken place in the light of day, she would have seen them bringing down trees, grading the road bed, driving piles, fashioning heavy wooden rails, or spiking down strips of iron on those rails. A feature of both ends of the road would be a turnabout: a circular or “Y” shaped arrangement of track to position the locomotive forward for the return trip. The railroad, according to the provisions of its charter, opened new sections of the line in 10-miles sections. As a result, there would be more railroad than was actual used most of the time. The men pushing the car with the women and children to the home of the Colonel were

going north away from the turnabout and the expected direction of the train on a section of railroad that had not been opened.

Insomuch as time is concerned, Kemble's references to the time of day – both clock time and observations of the Sun – contribute to the interpretation of the text. It is rather easy to determine the times for sunrise, sunset, civil twilight, and so farther for the days 22 December 1838 through 24 December 1838 at specific geographic coordinates. Assuming that she is using a watch to tell the times she is recording, it is likely set to solar noon at Philadelphia, the place where her journey began. The Sun and Moon data for the coordinates of this area of Wayne County, North Carolina, for Sunday 23 December 1838 as calculated by the US Naval Observatory are as follows: sunset was at 5:05 PM, with evening civil twilight ending at 5:33. The Moon transit was at 6:02 PM, and it was a first quarter Moon. That Mrs. Kemble could distinguish the houses in the field at the site of the Colonel's plantation suggests that civil twilight had not yet ended. The first quarter Moon would not have provided enough light for that extremely dangerous trip there on the flat car if it were later. Her trip the night before from Enfield to Stantonsburg would have lasted approximately seven hours assuming her note that it stated at approximately 12.30 AM. Sunrise on 23 December 1838 at Stantonsburg occurred at 7:18 AM.

On 23 December 2003, I enlisted the aid of my friend Victor Galloway in retracing the route of the Mrs. Kemble's journey through North Carolina from Weldon to Wilmington, 165 years to the date of the stagecoach ride. The purpose of this undertaking was to replace the imaginary landscape that is unavoidable created by reading a narrative with the impression of an actual landscape with spatial relationships. Having deconstructed the Kemble text into a grocery list of geographic information, it was necessary to reconstruct them as an itinerary. That is, a new narrative that describes place and path.

On reaching the north bank of the Roanoke River opposite Weldon early, we observed a historic marker commemorating the completion of the first railroad in North Carolina in 1833. This was the Petersburg Rail Road, and it terminated at the extinct town of Blakeley on the north bank of the river below Weldon. The purpose of this railroad was to intercept produce traveling on the Roanoke Canal. The canal had been under construction since the late 1810s, but really did not progress until North Carolina hired its first professional civil engineer, Hamilton Fulton. It was built by the Roanoke Navigation Company and supported by a joint investment on the part of North Carolina and Virginia. The state engineers for the Commonwealth of Virginia, Thomas Moore and the celebrated Claudius Crozet also contributed their expertise to its competition. The purpose of the canal was to bypass the Great Falls of the Roanoke, and allow bateau load with produce from the extensive upper Roanoke valley to be transported the full length of the river with breaking bulk. Eventually steamboats from Norfolk would ply the river up to Weldon by way of Albemarle Sound and the Dismal Swamp Canal, receive produce there, and then proceed back. This improvement deprived the rival commercial town of Petersburg the produce that had previous come by wagon after it had been offloaded above the falls. There answer was to build a railroad, a remarkable feat consider that the technology was still in its infancy. However, Norfolk was quick to respond in kind, the Portsmouth & Roanoke Rail Road.

Walter Gwynn had acquired his training with the United States Engineers. He participated in the survey of the Baltimore & Ohio Rail Road, assisted in the construction of

the Petersburg Rail Road, was the chief engineer for the Portsmouth & Roanoke Rail Road, later the chief engineer for the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road, was chief engineer for the North Carolina Railroad, and participated in the construction of the Wilmington & Manchester Railroad. Though largely forgotten, few individuals exercise as much influence in the development of the rail network in North Carolina as Gwynn. In 1833, he presented his survey of the route of the Portsmouth & Roanoke Rail Road to the directors of the company. It was to extend through the Dismal Swamp, cross the Nottoway and Meherrin, and enter North Carolina north of Margarettsville, North Carolina. The railroad was completed to the Weldon Toll Bridge in 1837.

The Weldon Toll Bridge with its railroad track was built by the Weldon Toll Bridge Company, and the friends of this company in the North Carolina Legislature successfully blocked efforts of the Petersburg Rail Road to build a competing bridge downriver. On the opposite side of the Roanoke, the citizens of Halifax County had incorporated the Halifax & Weldon Rail Road in 1833. This railroad, if completed, would extend the reach of the Portsmouth & Roanoke Rail Road well into North Carolina. However, by 1837, the Weldon & Halifax had merged with the Wilmington & Raleigh so the entire distance from Weldon to Wilmington was controlled by the latter. The Petersburg Rail Road incorporated the Greenville & Roanoke, a spur line to connect to the Roanoke above the Great Falls. A bridge was constructed at that site by the Raleigh & Gaston Rail Road.

Mrs. Kemble, on crossing the Roanoke, took notice of the rocks and islands that punctuated the flow of its waters. The perfect vantage point for observing the same scene is now from the center of the bridge on US 301. Near Weldon, the Piedmont Plateau transitions to the Coastal Plain. The "Generalized Geologic Map of North Carolina" included in *The Commercial Granites of North Carolina* by Richard J. Council shows a set of north-to-south bands of pre-Cambrian and Paleozoic granitic rock in the northeast Piedmont separated by slates, flows, and pyroclastics from the lower Paleozoic. The Piedmont is what geologists call an "exotic terrain," meaning it was not original part of the North American continent. It was original an arc of volcanic islands, much like the present-day Hawaii. During the Ordovician Period, approximately half a billion years ago, the North American continent collided with these islands. The basement rock of the Coastal Plain, by contrast, is a part of Africa that was added when the supercontinent Pangaea tore apart approximately 200 million years ago. The piers of abandoned Seaboard Railroad Bridge are built of the pre-Cambrian granite, and in the construction of the upper locks of the Roanoke Canal you can find blocks of the consolidated pyroclasts.

Natural History is inseparable from Human History. Mrs. Kemble describes Weldon as a "place where as place was intended to be." It had long been a place, and a significant one at that. If the Roanoke Canal was the only work of man there, it was still be one of the most significant places in North Carolina and Virginia. So much so, that both states chose to build their first railroad to this location rather than connect their cities. Had the Great Falls of the Roanoke not existed, the course of railroad development in both states would have been focused towards other commercial possibilities.

On the south bank of the Roanoke at Weldon there is a park. Anglers venture out onto the rocks from this point, and the Roanoke Canal hiking trail begins. The trail follows

the canal past the Roanoke Rapids Dam, and western entrance to the canal is now submerged under the Roanoke Rapids Lake. Mrs. Kemble described a large millpond and “one exceedingly dirty-looking old wooden house” at Weldon. The mill was likely Jabez Smith’s mill in the canal basin. Smith, a Petersburg flour manufacturer had the insight to realize that he could save by milling grain as it arrived in Weldon on the canal, then shipping the processed commodity on to Petersburg. The one old house, and any old house at this time dated by to colonial times, could only been the Weldon’s Orchard plantation house. The “portly dame” that served as hostess for the travelers’ meal at this *ad hoc* inn was surely the last of the Weldon heirs. The description of the interior of the house that appear in the Kemble *Journal* suggests that the fireplace is the dominate element of its construction, both at the entrance and upstairs. The second story room where the women passengers rest did have plastered walls. Certainly, great care when into building this structure than the typical hall and parlor dwelling common to early settlers. The meal, by Kemble’s account, sounds appalling, yet the mysterious black ingredient in the stuffing of the chicken might have merely been the giblets, and the fried lumps of dough being the familiar Southern creation known as a “hushpuppy.” About a decade latter, Weldon was known for Mr. Whitfield’s inn that served stewed oysters. However, as Olmsted observed, there appeared to be some sort of arrangement between the proprietors of inns of the region and stagecoach drivers to give the occasional passenger little choice but to accept these accommodations.

Mrs. Kemble records that the train arrived at Weldon between eight and nine o’clock in the evening, and took three hours to reach what we have determined to be the environs of Enfield, a distance of approximately twenty miles. This comes out to the almost unimaginable pace of six and a half miles per hour. Thirteen miles per hour for a locomotive of the day was consider fast. In the dark, she saw nothing outside her car. After about an hour, her train would have passed Halifax and crossed over Quankey Creek. From these to Enfield, the railroad passes through Marsh Swamp. Even today, there is hardly a way to access this area by road.

Given the combined information found in Mrs. Kemble’s *Journal*, period newspaper article, and documents of the Post Office Department, the most like set of modern roads that approximate the route of the stagecoach from Enfield to Stantonburg on 23 December 1838 was SR 1003, SR 1109, and NC 33 to NC 222/111. When comparing modern maps to archival maps, the geometric relationships created by the crossing of road and the location where roads cross streams help the researcher match the new to the old. In addition, modern road often retain the names of their predecessors on local maps. The particular situation with the road network of rural Edgecombe and Wilson counties is that the roads generally follow the high ground through swampy areas, and most of the land away from the major highways is still agricultural.

My expedition with Victor in 2003 almost came to an end when we pull of the road at one location on NC33 to take a photo. On what seemed like firm ground, the rear wheels of my car sank into the mud. Here, at some remote place with not so much as a house in sight, there was little choice but to use our ingenuity to extricate the car. We did not pass any town on the road where we seek services, nor did our maps suggest we could reach

such a place with a hike of at least fifteen miles. Fortunately, there was a considerable amount of pine debris off the side of the road, and several two-by-sixes of about fifteen inches in my trunk. After a number of unsuccessful attempts, we managed to get some traction and bring the car back on the road. This experience seems to hammer home the point that after none than a century and a half the landscape of rural Edgecombe County retains its character. It is a landscape of fields and widely spaced farm houses, all picturesque in the context of modern sensibilities. From time to time along the route, solitary abandoned old homes can be seen inviting thoughts of some future restoration to their former grandeur.

Stantonsburg is a place that I've visited several times. Entering town from the south, the present-day motorist passes over a short bridge shaded by ancient trees at Contentnea Creek. My first attempt to drive the stagecoach route occurred during July of 2003. Using the Gilmer Map as my guide, I followed NC 111 from Goldsboro to Patetown the drove west to Old Seven Bridge Road. The pattern of modern roads seemed to approximate the existing roads in 1860s. After crossing Nahunta Swamp, the road joins NC 222 and NC 111 joins that road near Eureka. At Stantonsburg, in Wilson County, I meet a pleasant couple coming out of the drugstore with ice cream cones. While enjoying their treats in the summer heat, they took the time to extol the virtues of their community. While none of the information served my immediate purpose, the obvious serenity betrayed by their countenance suggested that Stantonsburg was worth considering in retirement. Yet, this is true of almost any small town in North Carolina.

North of Stantonsburg on the Old Stantonsburg and Tarborough Road is the town of Saratoga at a crossroads. There is a marvelous example of gas station architecture on one corner, though the structure seems to have been abandoned for many years. The roof features painted metal panels that imitate Spanish tiles, and the corners have *art deco* columns that rise above the roofline. Continuing north, one finds Pitts X-roads. It appears in early nineteenth century maps and is mentioned in connection with subscription to the stock of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road. It is a community rather than a town, and there are several very old farm houses in the neighborhood including one on the road to Wilson that appears to have started with a *hall and parlor* layout. As with many houses in this section of eastern North Carolina, it appears that subsequent generation built onto the original dwelling – a domestic folk architecture of *add-ons* as my friend Victor dubbed it. The location of Pitts X-roads and its enduring presence on maps makes it a control point in matching the geometry of the old road network with the new.

Waynesborough became Goldsboro when the town was physical moved to the railroad some years after it was complete. The original town was to the west of the track. On the occasion of George Washington's Birthday in 1839, the people of Waynesborough also celebrated the completion of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road to their town. On the same day, they also celebrated the arrival of the steamboat *E.D. MacNair*. This was the first steam power vessel to venture this far inland on the Neuse. It had previously made similar probes on the Tar and Northeast Cape Fear. The venerable Colonel Slocomb attended this celebration as a guest of honor at the festival.



Mrs. Kemble remarked on the color of the Neuse and its rapid flow as she walked behind the stage crossing the rickety bridge below Waynesborough. The same can still be observed from the US 117 bridge of the Neuse at Goldsboro, but the span of the river at the bridge on Grantham a short distance to the west narrows. The flow of the current under this bridge is quite rapid, and the present-day bridge at this site is primitive enough to give the motorist second thoughts about crossing it.

The climax of the day's activities was exploring Dudley. Our conversation with several local people was fruitless. They had never heard of Colonel Slocomb or the "Dead Man's Field." Previous, I had visited Dudley on a Saturday and happened upon two fellows looking for the graves of their ancestors near East Wayne High School. They knew the area well and were familiar with the Mary Slocomb legend, but only had a guess as to where the plantation had been located. The old farm house with its collection of collapsing outbuildings fit Kemble's description, but was in the wrong place by account of "Boors of Carolina." The high railroad embankments over Brooks Swamp were south of Dudley.

The evening before the expedition, we had discussed Mrs. Kemble's ride on the flat car at length. Victor had asked why with a stagecoach at hand why did the passenger take the risk? The stages were waiting to receive passengers going in the opposite direction, and it is likely that they could have gone a mile or so down the road along the track to the Colonel's house. This is, if the Old Mount Olive Road existed at that time. Considering the contrary, this ill-conceived adventure seems more viable. The obvious starting point, and a good place on high ground to place a turnabout, is at the intersection of Everett Road and the Old Mount Olive Road.

As the sun was setting, I parked the car off the road at the Everett Road. When it appeared as a glow, we began walking on Old Mount Olive Road toward Dudley. The road descended into Brooks Swamp the difference in the height of the railroad increased. After about a half an hour of walking, we reached Parker Road. The track was level with the road, and we had to cross what we interpreted to be the two ravines. The wind was not howling from the north, but the temperature had definitely dropped. Our surroundings were still distinguishable, and from Kemble's observation of seeing the plantation house and surrounding outbuildings, it was apparent that we had arrived at the same point at about the same time of day. After congratulating ourselves on a successful experiment, we decided to return to the before we lost our light.

On our return to Wilmington, Victor noted that we had figured out the path to get to the Colonel's Plantation, but we still had no idea of its size and really did not know how it had changed in 165 years. If we would have continued our walk on Parker Road, would we see on the landscape some evidence of its former use? Regrettably, a headache had overtaken me at this point suddenly, and I had lost my enthusiasm for further discussion. On arriving home, it became apparent that I was running a fever and needed to get to bed. The rest of the holiday, the flu curtailed my plans for repeat adventures.

Personal knowledge of an actual landscape is essential for interpreting its past. On another level, there are countless reasons that are both gratifying to the thirst for

knowledge, and serve personal development, for having a more visceral appreciation of a place in time. For all the joys that antibacterial soap and microwavable entrees have provided, we labor under the specter of an unacceptable future beyond the most outlandish Victorian fantasy. The present is defined outside of time and space by the anonymous shadow gods of Wall Street is wrought with uncertainty. Venturing onto an unfamiliar landscape exercises those innate spatial skills that modern life encourages most to ignore. It is not a virtual world, but an actual world. The feeling of nostalgia is a safeguard that the mind has devised to protect itself by questioning almighty now, and tether it to those events that shaped its being.

[On Wednesday, 14 May 2008, I presented a lecture entitled *The Stagecoach Line of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road* at the North Carolina Museum of History in connection with winning the museum's annual Student Essay Award. The paper submitted to the competition built upon earlier research I had published in *The North Carolina Geographer* in 2005.]

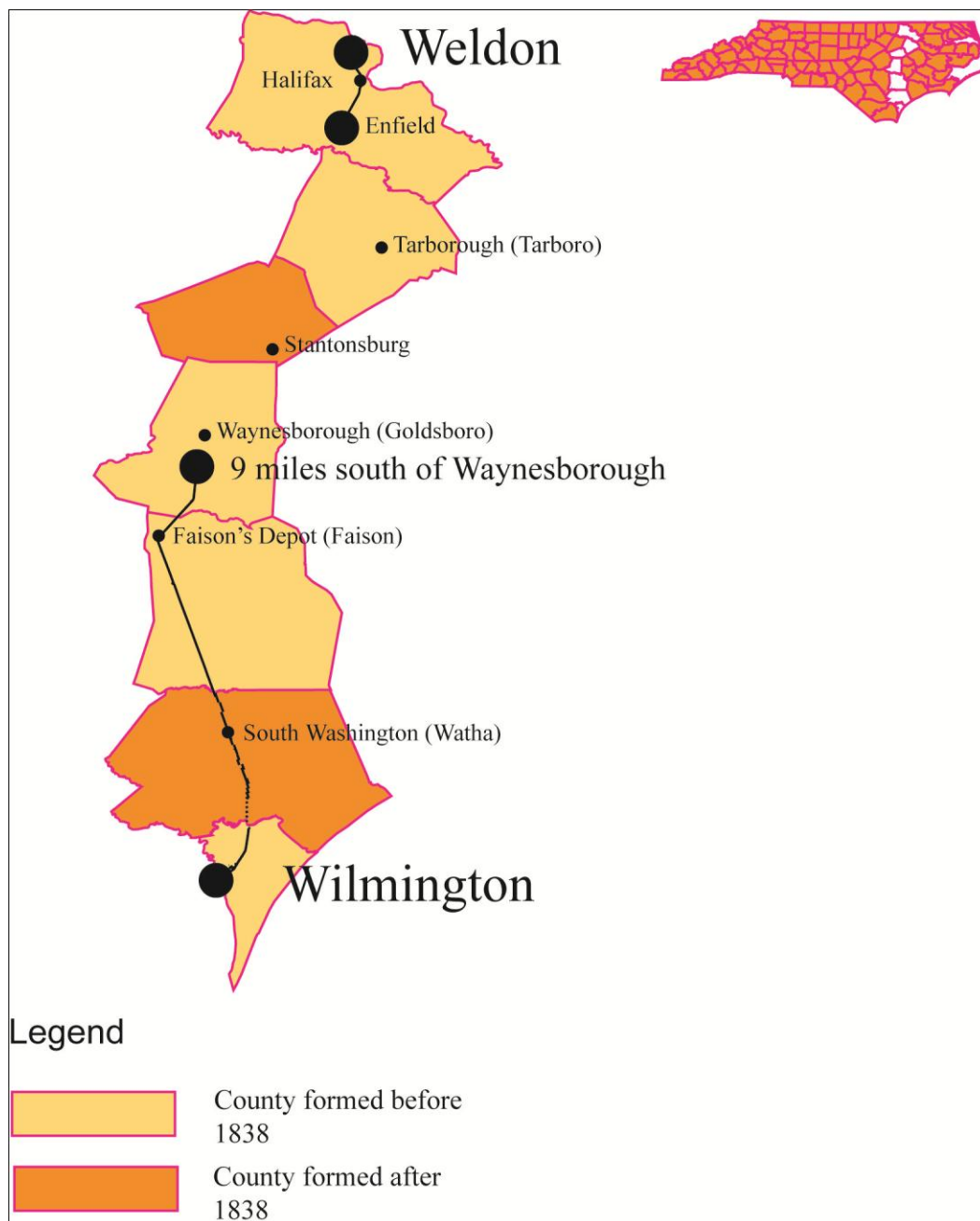


Figure 2. The completed track of the Wilmington & Raleigh Rail Road at the time of Mrs. Kemble's trip through North Carolina in December of 1838

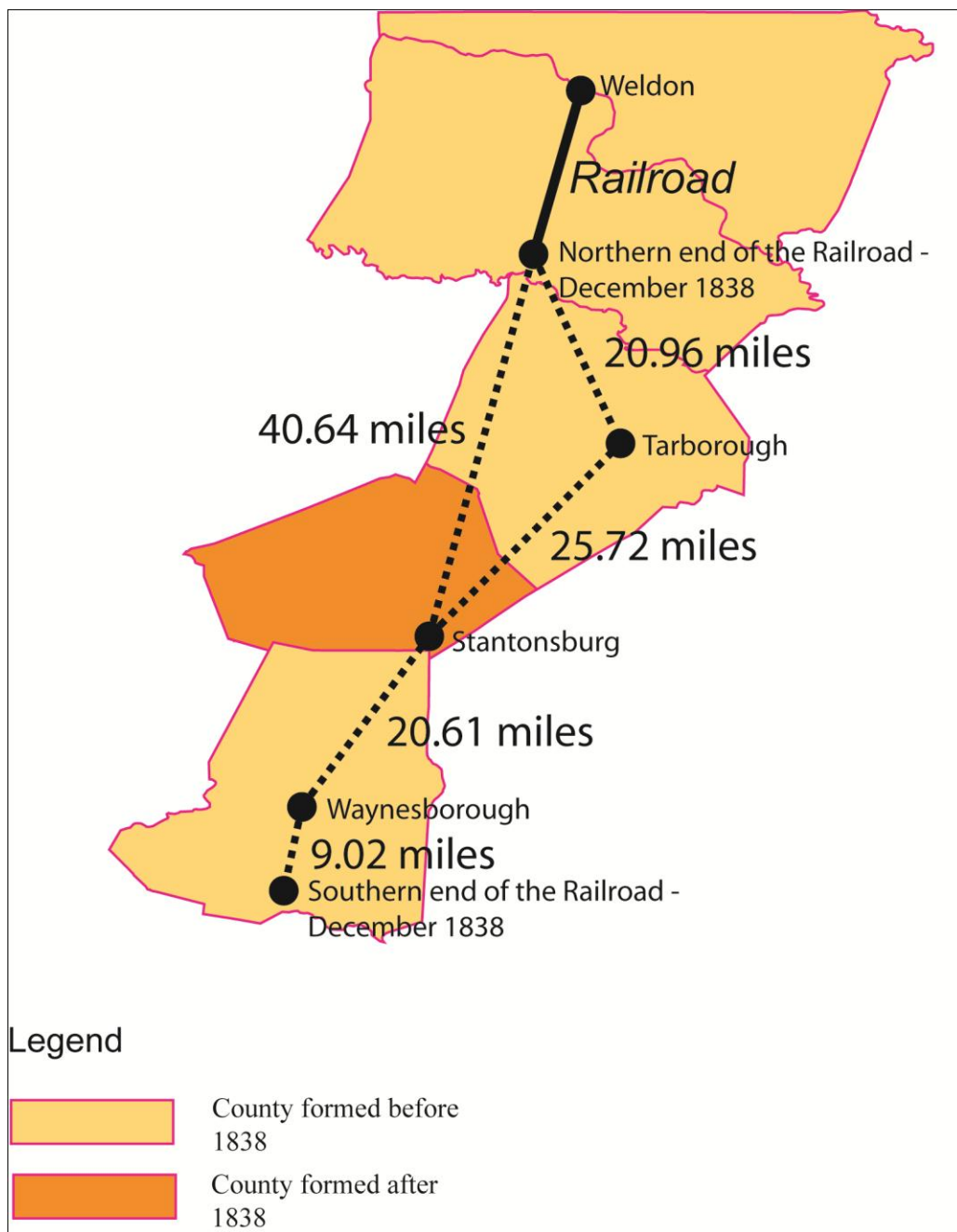


Figure 3. This map shows the direct distances between locations on the stagecoach route.



Figure 4. This map shows the stagecoach route along roads that existed in 1838.

